

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Christ Episcopal Church

Cleveland, Rowan County, RW0804, Listed 12/5/2011

Nomination by Jennifer Martin Mitchell

Photographs by Jennifer Martin Mitchell, November 2010



Overall view



Side and rear view

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Christ Episcopal Church

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 3430 Old US Highway 70

N/A ☐ not for publication

city or town Cleveland

☒ vicinity

state North Carolina

code NC

county Rowan

code 159

zip code 27013

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined eligible for the
National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.

☐ removed from the National
Register.

☐ other, explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Christ Episcopal Church
Name of Property

Rowan County, North Carolina
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	1	buildings
1	1	sites
1	2	structures
0	0	objects
4	4	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

FUNERARY/cemetery

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

FUNERARY/cemetery

RECREATION

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Gothic Revival

Craftsman

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☐ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☒ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1827-1926

Significant Dates

1827

1926

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Fleming, Samuel (builder)

Heathman, J. (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository:

Rowan County Public Library

Christ Episcopal Church
Name of Property

Rowan County, North Carolina
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 10.09 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	17	530360	3954220	3	17	530200	3953860
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	17	530370	3954120	4	17	530100	3953900

☒ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jennifer Martin Mitchell
organization MdM Historical Consulting, Inc. date April 29, 2011
street & number Post Office Box 1399 telephone 919/368-1602
city or town Durham state NC zip code 27702

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Vestry of Christ Episcopal Church (Attn.: Rev. Kenneth J. Saunders III)
street & number P.O. Box 37 telephone 704-278-4652
city or town Cleveland state NC zip code 27013

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Christ Episcopal Church
Rowan County, NC

Founded by a congregation started in the late eighteenth century, Christ Episcopal Church was built beginning in 1826 with consecration occurring in August 1827. Located immediately outside of the town of Cleveland in northwest Rowan County, the church property includes the 1826-1827 gable-front vernacular Gothic Revival- and Craftsman-style chapel; a 1926 Craftsman-style parish house attached to the original building by an open brick arcaded breezeway; a historic cemetery containing the graves of the church founders and early members; a modern picnic shelter; a small outdoor chapel and storage shed dating to the modern period, and brick walls built in 1977 that mark the entrance to the church property from Old U. S. Highway 70.

Christ Episcopal Church occupies ten acres abutting the eastern boundary of the town of Cleveland, which was incorporated in 1883 as Third Creek, but whose name was changed in 1887 to honor President Grover Cleveland. Third Creek, which originates in Alexander County and crosses Iredell County and part of Rowan County, is situated a little over a mile to the northwest of the church. Young Mountain, which boasts an elevation of 1,092 feet, is one mile to the northeast. Withrow Creek, which flows from Iredell County in a northeasterly direction into Rowan County, is a little over two miles to the south. The tracks of the former Western North Carolina Railroad run on the south side of Old U.S. Highway 70, immediately opposite the entrance to the church. At Barber, which is a little over a mile to the east, the tracks of the former Southern Railway run in a north-south direction.

Lying on the north side of Old U.S. Highway 70, the church parcel is elongated with the buildings occupying the north, or rear, half of the lot. From the highway, the church is accessible by a single-lane paved linear road that proceeds through an allée of deodar cedar trees that were planted in 1946. The area west of the entrance road is thick with a variety of trees, including cedars and pines. The yard around the buildings is mostly grass-covered with several mature oaks dotting the front lawn. A large cemetery, containing both historic and modern markers, occupies a clearing that wraps around the east, west, and rear sides of the church building. A modern picnic shelter topped with a gable roof; a playground; a small front-gabled storage shed; and an outdoor chapel stand to the southwest.

Christ Episcopal Church began as a simple weatherboard chapel built in 1826-1827. When Bishop Ravenscroft consecrated the church in 1827, he described it as "plain but convenient." Ghost marks on the interior front wall indicate that the building likely had two front doors. It is possible that the gothic window openings are original to the building. However, they more likely date to later in the nineteenth century. One hundred years after it was built, in 1926, a parish house with Craftsman-style elements was built beside the chapel to the west. As specified by the individual who funded the construction of the parish house, it was brick-veneered upon its completion. At the same time, the chapel was also brick veneered and some of the same Craftsman elements found on the parish house were applied to the chapel's exterior. A

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portico was added to the church; it was enclosed sometime after circa 1950.¹ Finally, the two buildings were connected by an open brick arcaded breezeway. In the mid-twentieth century, several small additions were made onto the rear of the parish house. While the 1926 building campaign altered the exterior of the early nineteenth-century chapel, its interior is remarkably intact, both as an early nineteenth-century interior and as a representation of the Gothic Revival ecclesiastic style, likely dating to a late nineteenth-century update. Furthermore, the application of a Craftsman-style exterior represents the evolution of the church architecturally. As its mission expanded and membership grew in the 1920s, the congregation chose a style appropriate to the period. Architecturally, Christ Episcopal Church represents a continuum of architectural trends from the early nineteenth-century finishes to the late nineteenth-century Gothic Revival-style refitting showcased on the chapel interior, to the imprint of the Craftsman style evident on the exterior.

Christ Episcopal Church
1826-1827; 1926
Contributing Building

The gable-front, wire-cut brick-veneered, heavy timber-framed building with Craftsman-style exterior faces south and is topped with an asphalt-shingle-covered roof that features Craftsman-style exposed rafter tails on its east and west elevations and wood triangular knee braces on the south (front) and north (rear) elevations. The building rests on a brick foundation delineated from the remainder of the exterior by a row of soldier-course bricks that extends along each elevation. Vertical beadboard sheathes the gable ends and molded purlins are found in the gable.

A double-leaf composite door with a stained-glass transom and stained-glass sidelights set in a one-story, gable-front projection occupies the center of the façade. This projection was likely added in 1926 when the church was brick veneered. Originally it was an open portico, but it was enclosed sometime after circa 1950. A set of concrete steps with a metal railing ascends to the entrance. The roof of the narthex overhangs the church doors slightly and, like the principal roof, features exposed rafter tails on its east and west elevations. A pair of brick pilasters with masonry bases frames the entrance. Stained glass windows above brick knee walls pierce the east and west elevations of the projection. A pair of ghost windows outlined in soldier course bricks and with square masonry elements at each corner flanks the projection at the first story. These same masonry blocks are found at the base of the large three-part, stained-glass, Gothic-arched window that pierces the upper wall just above the front projection. A masonry cross crowns the façade and is positioned just under the gable roof overhang. Each corner of the church displays white masonry blocks just above the foundation bricks and immediately beneath the roof eaves.

¹ A photograph in the North Carolina Collection at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill taken circa 1950 shows an open portico on the church. It was similar to the one currently on the parish house.

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The east elevation features five stained-glass, Gothic-arched windows with wood frames. Windows are outlined in soldier-course brick and sills are formed by brick headers on this and other elevations.

The north, or rear, elevation features two bays on the lower level: the east bay holds a Gothic-arched, one-over-one window, while the west bay is a six-panel wood door topped by a Gothic-arched transom and accessed by a set of concrete steps facing west and fronted by a low brick wall that is curved at the top of its west end. A large stained-glass, Gothic-arched window identical to the one on the façade, but without the decorative masonry blocks, pierces the center of the upper level of this elevation.

The west elevation is nearly identical to the east elevation, except that one of the five bays on the west elevation—the second from the north end—is filled with a door, instead of a window. The paneled wood door with stained glass in its upper half connects the 1826-1827 chapel to the arcaded breezeway and likely dates to 1926.

The brick breezeway features a concrete floor and three round-arch openings on both the north and south elevations. The center arches are larger and are flanked on each side by smaller, yet identical arched openings that top low, brick knee walls with masonry caps. A masonry keystone crowns the brick arch on each of these open bays. Access to the breezeway is by a brick and concrete handicap ramp on the south (front) side and a set of concrete steps on the north (rear) side, both with decorative metal railings. On the south elevation the flat roof that tops the breezeway is fronted by crenellations topped with masonry coping. On the north elevation, the eaves of the flat roof overhang and display exposed rafter tails. Rectangular transoms pierce the walls of both the chapel and mission house just above the breezeway's roof.

Just north of the breezeway stands a round pole topped with a bell from which hangs a chain for ringing.

Interior

A pair of modern swinging wood doors, each with a rectangular window, separates the narthex from the nave. A Gothic-arched, three-part, stained-glass transom is positioned above these doors. The sanctuary remains unpainted, with few changes. An exception is the enclosure of the upper gallery that spanned the east and west sides of the sanctuary. According to church history, African American church-goers occupied the gallery before and after the Civil War. It was most likely enclosed by the late nineteenth century after the African American members left the church. Ghosts of two door openings are also located on the south wall, flanking the current central entrance. It is likely that these openings were the original front door bays and that they were removed during a late nineteenth-century refitting of the church and subsequently replaced with the current, single, Gothic-arched entry. Five Gothic-arched stained-glass windows line both side walls with the exception of the entry bay on the west elevation; the windows were installed in the

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1950s and each is dedicated to an individual or individuals associated with the church. The arched window openings may be original, but are likely part of the late nineteenth-century refitting of the church. A vertical beadboard wainscot extends along each wall; above, horizontal hand-planed flush boards sheath the walls. The nave features east and west side aisles with a central aisle between the pews. A series of full-height paired hand-chamfered posts attached to the ceiling by mortise and tenon joints are located on each side of the center aisle and support the upper gallery. Hand-chamfered horizontal cross beams span the coved ceiling above the center aisle at the same intervals as the hand-chamfered vertical supports spaced along both sides of the aisle; similar beams support the gallery on either side of the center aisle. A paneled, solid chancel rail separates the nave from the chancel. On both sides of the chancel, an identical rail separates the choir from the altar, which contains the ambo and lectern. The apse containing the communion table is located behind an open chancel rail. The wood reredos spans the wall behind the communion table. Much of the woodwork—including the altar, communion rail, the pulpit, the processional cross and the reredos—were made around 1900 by Rev. Bruce Owens (1871-1953), an Episcopal priest who grew up in Christ Episcopal Church.² Originally, the church had a high pulpit, but it was removed before 1881. A pair of sacristies (or vestry rooms) accessible through multi-paneled wood doors on the south walls flanks the apse. These were added sometime before 1881.³ The addition of the sacristies and the changes to the altar and furniture are in keeping with changing liturgical practices.

Christ Episcopal Church Parish House
1926
Contributing Building

The gable-front, wire-cut brick-veneered, Craftsman-influenced one-and-a-half-story building faces south and is T-shaped resulting from intersecting rear wings; in addition, a series of small additions occupy the rear. An asphalt-shingle-covered roof crowns the building and features exposed rafter tails and wood triangular knee braces. The building rests on a brick foundation delineated from the remainder of the exterior by a row of soldier-course bricks extending along each elevation. Windows throughout contain textured glass, but all are original. The parish house was brick-veneered at its completion in 1926.

Concrete steps bordered by modern metal handrails and flanking low brick knee walls with concrete caps lead to the façade's one-story, gable-front portico with exposed rafter tails on its east and west sides and molded purlins and vertical beadboard in the gable. Bold, square brick posts fronting low brick knee walls with concrete caps support the portico that shelters the double-leaf, half-glazed doors with three recessed

² Alda Thompson Furches, "History of Christ Episcopal Church, Cleveland, N.C." Research paper in the History Room of the Rowan County Public Library, Salisbury, North Carolina, 1982. N.p.

³ Rev. Robert B. Owens, *Christ Church, Rowan County: An Historical Sketch* (Charlotte: Presbyterian Standard Publication Company, 1921), 14; *The Church Messenger*, April 11, 1881.

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panels. Wood molding frames these original doors that are fronted with a pair of wood screened doors. A pair of one-over-one double-hung sash topped with a flat row of soldier-course bricks is located on each side of the portico; an identical pair of windows is positioned in the upper façade just above the portico. All windows on the parish house have the same soldier-course lintels as those on the façade. Flush panels bordered by soldier-course bricks with contrasting white square masonry corner blocks enhance the upper façade. A marble plaque under the portico credits W. F. Thompson with building the parish house in honor of his mother, Nancy Brandon Pinkston Thompson.

Each original elevation of the parish house is enlivened with two rows of soldier-course bricks that terminate at a masonry block at the building's corners. One row of soldier-course bricks is just below the roof's eave and the other at the top of the foundation wall. The east elevation faces the chapel and displays a ghost window outlined in soldier-course brick and masonry squares forward of the breezeway. A fifteen-light, single-leaf door topped with a soldier-course lintel and fronted with a wood and screen door is located in the breezeway. Three pairs of one-over-one double-hung sash with soldier-course headers are positioned just north of the breezeway on the east elevation.

An intersecting wing is located at the building's rear. Like the remainder of the building, it displays rafter tails below the eaves and triangular knee braces on its gable ends. On the wing's east side a single pair of windows identical to those found throughout the building pierces the south and north walls. A single one-over-one, double-hung sash is found on the east gable end of this wing, just to the south of a gable-end brick chimney. A shed-roofed, brick-veneered addition dating to circa 1955 and containing a restroom is located on the northeast corner of the intersecting wing. It features small, six-over-six, double-hung sash windows on its east and north elevations and exposed rafter tails on its south and north elevations. A smaller and shorter, brick-veneered shed addition used for storage has been built onto the north elevation of the intersecting wing, between the wing's pair of windows and the larger shed addition. It is only accessible from the exterior. The west intersecting wing is identical to the east intersecting rear wing except that it lacks a chimney. Instead, its gable end is pierced with a centrally-located, single sash. A rectangular louvered vent is located just under the gable roof overhang.

The rear (north) gable end projects slightly from the intersecting wings and features a tall, slender brick chimney that pierces the rear eave. The gable end projection displays four windows identical to those found on the rest of the building on its lower level and a pair of smaller such windows on the upper level. A single, one-over-one, double-hung sash is positioned on the east wall of the rear projection; an identical window likely pierced the west wall of the rear projection, but it was likely converted to an interior doorway for the small, gable-front addition on the northwest corner of the rear projecting wing. Small additions that are only one bay wide have been built on the east and west ends of the rear gable end. The eastern addition is elevated by concrete piers and is sheathed in German siding. It features a shed roof with rafter tails above a

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single leaf door on the north elevation accessible by a set of concrete steps. The other addition is the previously-referenced brick veneered, gable roofed block on the northwest corner of the projecting rear gable. It features rafter tails on the east and west elevations and a single six-over-six, double-hung sash on its north elevation. These additions likely date to the mid-twentieth century.

The west elevation features four pairs of double-hung sash.

Interior

A foyer is located just inside the entrance to the parish house. A single large meeting space with a carpeted floor and sheathed in unpainted, horizontal beadboard dominates the parish house interior. The room contains original suspended light fixtures and multi-paneled wood doors. Its tall baseboards have molded caps and doors and windows have molded lintels. The south end of the building contains small meeting rooms fronted with folding wooden doors. A stair in the southeast corner of one meeting room leads to the upper loft where two additional small meeting rooms are located. Original folding panels allow occupants of the upper level rooms to look down into the large meeting space. A kitchen is located on the first level at the rear of the parish house. A stair to the west of the kitchen leads to rooms above the kitchen used for storage. Just to the west of the stair is a small bathroom located in the gabled addition. Just east of the kitchen are a dressing room and a modern bathroom located in the mid-twentieth-century shed addition.

Christ Episcopal Church Cemetery Late eighteenth century to present Contributing Site

The large cemetery containing approximately 300 grave sites is located on the east, north, and west sides of the chapel and parish hall and is separated from the buildings by a gravel-covered driveway. The majority of the historic grave markers are in the rear one-half of the cemetery, while modern markers dominate the northwest section. Most of the stones predate 1960 with 147 of the markers erected before 1939. The cemetery occupies mostly level ground. The site is clear of trees and is grass-covered. Except for an iron gate held up by two square granite posts that are just under five feet tall, there are no other structures in the cemetery. The gate dates to the early nineteenth century and formerly connected to a rock wall that surrounded the cemetery, but no longer stands.

According to church history, congregation members did not agree on the location of the cemetery. Elias Barber and Thomas Chunn, who were brothers-in-law, led the two opposing groups. Barber thought the cemetery should be on the west side of the church and Chunn wanted it on the east side. Chunn died first and was buried on the east side in 1822. Soon thereafter, one of Barber's children died and was buried on

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the west side. From these burials, two cemeteries expanded and originally merged into one.⁴ The oldest grave markers date to the early nineteenth century and predate the present church. The grave of Elizabeth Barber, who was instrumental in the founding of the church and the building of the first log chapel nearby, is marked by a stone dated May 23, 1835. The oldest markers are mostly marble tablets with flat, slightly arched, or shouldered crowns. Modern markers are more substantial and of varying shapes.

Iron Gate
1826-1827
Contributing Structure

The only remnant of the rock wall that once enclosed a portion of the cemetery is the iron and granite gate standing east of the chapel. Iron pickets forming a center point and held together with a “z” brace connect the nearly-square, granite posts that stand approximately four or five feet apart. A small bird house has been attached to one side of the iron gate.

Picnic Shelter
1990
Noncontributing Structure

A front-gabled, open-air wood picnic shelter stands southwest of the chapel and parish house and just south of the west side of the cemetery. A series of braced wood posts set in a concrete pad support the roof structure. Flush boards sheath the gabled ends. A wood playground set and a basketball goal stand just south of the shelter

Children’s Chapel
1990
Noncontributing Site

A small outdoor chapel is located south of the picnic shelter. The chapel consists of simple wood benches facing a low stone wall that functions as an altar. A wood cross made of skinned logs stands at the south end of the chapel just behind the stone wall. A wood sign consisting of a large flat panel supported on each end by square posts with pyramidal caps stands in front of the chapel and reads, “The Children’s Chapel, Dedicated in Honor of Louise “Aunt Teah” Wilhelm.

⁴ Owens, 13-14.

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Christ Episcopal Church
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Storage Shed
Ca. 1990
Noncontributing Building

A small, pre-fabricated, gable-front storage building constructed of composite materials stands just west of the picnic shelter.

Entrance Marker
1977
Noncontributing Structure

A pair of identical red-brick walls marks the entrance to the church property on Old U.S. Highway 70. Each wall is composed of two parts. On the south end of each stands a flat-topped section containing a dedication plaque that reads, "CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH/In Memory of Pamela Wilhelm Kistler, Nov. 26, 1955-June 25, 1977." A brick pillar with a concrete cap stands on the north end of that portion of each wall and connects to a longer and taller wall that increases in height from south to north. On each north end is another brick pillar—this one taller than the south pillar—also topped with a concrete cap. A sign for the church consisting of metal panels suspended on a vertical metal pole stands to the southwest of the west brick wall.

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Christ Episcopal Church
Rowan County, NC

Summary

Christ Episcopal Church, whose congregation formed in the late eighteenth century, stands just outside the town limits of Cleveland in rural Rowan County, North Carolina. The 1826-1827 heavy timber frame building is the oldest Episcopal church in Rowan County. As a result of a series of architectural redesigns, Christ Episcopal Church reflects several periods. First, its original appearance is seen in its massing, front-gabled form, and on the interior, its unpainted wood, hand-planed sheathing, and hand-crafted chamfered structural system. Later in the nineteenth century, the church was refitted in the Gothic Revival style with Gothic-arched windows and doors, as well as the creation of a central entry with a corresponding center aisle and two sacristies. The addition of new woodworking and furniture hand made around 1900 by Rev. Bruce Owens, an Episcopal priest who grew up in Christ Episcopal Church, including the altar, communion rail, the pulpit, the processional cross and the reredos, further reflects the Gothic Revival style as espoused by the tractarian movement of the nineteenth-century Episcopal denomination, which promoted the honest expression of materials and the use of sacred religious symbols and vestments. In 1926, a Craftsman-influenced, brick-veneer parish house was built next to the church. At that time, the chapel was also brick veneered in the Craftsman-style to match the parish house. The Craftsman style of ecclesiastic architecture also celebrated handcraftsmanship and created an intimacy associated with spiritual activities.

Christ Episcopal Church is significant under Criterion C as an early nineteenth-century church that was refitted as a Gothic Revival-style church in the late nineteenth-century and was then transformed on its exterior into a Craftsman-style church while retaining its nineteenth-century interior. The 1926 parish house is architecturally significant as a local example of the Craftsman style as applied to an ecclesiastical building. The church meets Criteria Consideration A because, while it is owned by a religious institution, the building derives its primary significance from its architecture. The period of significance for this locally significant church is 1827, the date of construction, to 1926, the year the Craftsman-style parish house was built and the early nineteenth-century church was redesigned on the exterior as a Craftsman-style building.

History of the Christ Episcopal Church

In 1794, a group of Episcopalians from St. Mary's County, Maryland, settled on a large tract in western Rowan County. Among the settlers were two families of Barbers, one headed by Elias Barber and the other by Jonathan Barber, and members of the Chunn, Harrison, and Lightell families. Notable of the settlers was Elizabeth Wainwright Barber, wife of Elias Barber. In the early nineteenth century, she urged the construction of Christ Episcopal Church's first chapel, a small log building that stood twenty-five feet northwest of the current church on what was then land owned by the Barber family. Around 1817, the same

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year that the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina was established, the church was organized in that log building with Rev. Robert Johnstone Miller as its first rector.⁵

On April 28, 1821, Christ Episcopal Church was admitted into the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina signifying that it was fully organized with a vestry and a congregation and was part of the statewide organization of Episcopalians. At this time, the church had fifty-eight communicants.⁶

As Christ Episcopal Church grew, the congregation required a new building and in 1821, Elias Barber and his sons, John E. and Luke Barber, deeded five and a quarter acres on Third Creek for the construction of a building. On October 9, 1821, an advertisement appeared in the *Western Carolinian* appealing to friends of Christ Episcopal Church for funds with which to build a new chapel: "The Vestry and Congregation of Christ's Church in Rowan County, finding their present House of Worship insufficient to accommodate the numerous and respectable auditory which frequently attends; and not having it in their power, from their own resources, (during the present hard times) to erect such a building...are constrained to solicit assistance from their Christian friends...."⁷ It would be another five years before construction began.

In April 1825, Rev. Thomas Wright of Wadesboro, in Anson County, visited Christ Episcopal Church and St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Salisbury, the seat of Rowan County, and reported fifty-eight communicants at Christ Episcopal Church and six at St. Luke's. In November of that year Wright was named rector of both parishes. That same month, Bishop Ravenscroft preached at Christ Episcopal Church and served communion to fifty-six white and three African American communicants. The two churches would share ministers until 1850.⁸

In January 1826, Reverend Wright reported that "the brethren of Christ Church in general are of one mind and spirit; and walking themselves in the old paths and the good way, will induce others also to follow in their steps. They have recently raised the frame of a new building, sixty by forty feet."⁹ The March 7, 1826 edition of a Salisbury newspaper noted,

In our own neighborhood the Congregation of Christ Church, though a little band, have for some months been laudably engaged in collecting and preparing materials for a larger and more convenient building than that in which they at present assemble for public worship.

⁵ Furches.

⁶ "Christ Church to Celebrate 150th Anniversary Sunday," *Salisbury Sunday Post*, June 6, 1971.

⁷ "Christ Church to Celebrate 150th Anniversary Sunday," *Salisbury Sunday Post*, June 6, 1971.

⁸ "Christ Church to Celebrate 150th Anniversary Sunday," *Salisbury Sunday Post*, June 6, 1971; Rumple, Jethro, A History of Rowan County, North Carolina (Salisbury: J. J. Bruner, 1881), 434, 438.

⁹ Rumple, 439.

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And we learn that on the 27th, their new Temple, 60 feet by 40, was commenced, under the immediate superintendence of Samuel Fleming, of this county, and J. Heathman of Iredell, Builders. This church will probably be ready for consecration by the Bishop in November next.¹⁰

In May 1826, Rev. Wright reported to the convention of the Diocese at Hillsborough sixty-four communicants at Christ Church.¹¹

Church members Richard W. Barber, John D. Swann, and Benjamin Lightell made up the building committee. In August 1826, the vestry and wardens directed the committee to select the lowest bidder to construct the floors, ceiling, and walls, and to build the pulpit and pews. Further, they called for the “making of the window sashes, glazing the same in workmanlike manner.”¹²

Samuel Fleming and J. Heathman of Iredell County built the church and hewn and planed the timbers by hand. On June 4, 1827, an advertisement appeared in a Salisbury newspaper declaring, “Thirty or forty pews in the church lately erected will be publicly rented at the Church on Saturday, the 30th [inst.] to the highest bidders.” The revenue collected for the pews would be put toward the minister’s salary.¹³

On July 17, 1827, Bishop Ravenscroft, the first Episcopal bishop of North Carolina, consecrated the new building at Christ Episcopal Church with Revs. Thomas Wright, R. S. Miller, and William M. Green assisting the bishop in the services.¹⁴ In his report at the Diocese convention in Fayetteville in 1828, Bishop Ravenscroft described the Christ Episcopal Church congregation as a ‘large body of worshipers, the second in number of communicants in the Diocese.’¹⁵ He went on to say that ‘the building is plain but convenient, and adds much to the comfort of this large body of worshipers.’¹⁶

A succession of rectors served Christ Episcopal Church after Reverend Wright beginning in 1834 with Rev. John Morgan, who held the position until 1836. Under Rev. Thomas F. Davis, who served from 1836 until 1846, the church grew to 100 congregants in 1840. That same year, however, forty members left to form St. Andrews Episcopal Church near Woodleaf, also in Rowan County. In 1846, the Rev. John Haywood Parker, who had been assigned as rector to St. Luke’s in Salisbury, served as minister to Christ Church.

¹⁰ “Christ Church to Celebrate 150th Anniversary Sunday,” *Salisbury Sunday Post*, June 6, 1971.

¹¹ Rumple, 439.

¹² “Christ Church to Celebrate 150th Anniversary Sunday,” *Salisbury Sunday Post*, June 6, 1971.

¹³ “Christ Church to Celebrate 150th Anniversary Sunday,” *Salisbury Sunday Post*, June 6, 1971.

¹⁴ Rumple, 439.

¹⁵ Rumple, 440.

¹⁶ “Christ Church to Celebrate 150th Anniversary Sunday,” *Salisbury Sunday Post*, June 6, 1971.

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Two years later, Rev. Oliver Sherman Prescott became Parker's assistant and took over ministerial duties at Christ Church. After St. Luke's and Christ Church ceased sharing ministers in 1850, Rev. James Gilbert Jacocks took over duties at Christ Church and several other area congregations.¹⁷

In 1853, Bishop Silliman Ives described Christ Episcopal Church as 'one of the most numerous and in some respects interesting parishes in the Diocese, embracing as it does the bulk of the people and among them a large proportion of highly respectable and independent farmers who seem desirous of securing for themselves and their children the full benefits of the Gospel in providing an ample support for their devoted pastor.'¹⁸

In 1857, Rev. George Badger Wetmore took over from Reverend Jacocks, serving thirty two years. During his tenure a Sunday school was formed.¹⁹ He was followed by a series of clergy, including William Hill Hardin, Archdeacon of the Convocation of Charlotte, who in 1924 began a ten year stint at Christ Church.²⁰

In the mid-1920s, congregant W. Frank Thompson proposed to build a parish house in memory of his mother, Nancy Brandon Thompson, on the condition that the congregation would cover both the church and parish house in brick veneer. The congregation consented and the Craftsman-influenced parish house and brick work were completed in 1926.²¹ Isaac Lyerly and his sons did the masonry work.²² At this time, Craftsman-style detailing matching that on the parish house was added to the chapel to unite the two buildings stylistically.

Rev. Reuben Meredith served the church from 1934 until 1940. After their deaths in 1948, he and his wife were interred in the eastern section of the cemetery. Rev. Jadi Levi Martin was rector from 1941 to 1959, followed by Rev. William Moll and Rev. Donald Frazier, both of whom served two years each.

In 1946, Frank Thompson, who had provided for the parish house, bestowed another gift on the church when he deeded four and three-quarter acres on the south side of the property so that the church would have direct access to U. S. Highway 70. Before his gift, the church was accessible from the highway via a driveway located on private property. Thompson had the entrance road graded, planted deodar cedar trees

¹⁷ "Christ Church to Celebrate 150th Anniversary Sunday," *Salisbury Sunday Post*, June 6, 1971.

¹⁸ "Christ Church to Celebrate 150th Anniversary Sunday," *Salisbury Sunday Post*, June 6, 1971.

¹⁹ "Christ Church to Celebrate 150th Anniversary Sunday," *Salisbury Sunday Post*, June 6, 1971.

²⁰ Christ Episcopal Church website (www.christchurchclevelendnc.org), accessed January 3, 2011.

²¹ "Christ Church to Celebrate 150th Anniversary Sunday," *Salisbury Sunday Post*, June 6, 1971.

²² Furches.

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on both sides of this lane, and erected a brick sign at the entrance to the church on U. S. Highway 70. This sign was replaced with the current entrance walls in 1977.²³

In 1966, Rev. Claude A. Collins began his tenure as rector, a position he held until 1986. From 1986 to 1996, the church was served by three ministers: Rev. Warren Soule; Rev. Diane Corlett; and Rev. William Skidmore. From 1996 until 2007, a series of part time rectors, vicars, and clergy served Christ Church. In June 2007, Rev. Kenneth H. Saunders III became the full-time rector.²⁴

Architectural Context

Historic churches in rural Rowan County take many architectural forms, from German-influenced and Scots-Irish building styles to more common nineteenth-century forms such as the Gothic Revival and Greek Revival styles. But as architectural historian Davyd Foard Hood observes, the majority of churches in the county share common characteristics: a rectangular footprint with aisles parallel to the longer side of the building and entrances set in the short elevation opposite the liturgical wall.²⁵

Rowan County is known for its significant eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German churches. Zion (Organ) Lutheran Church is the oldest of the denomination's churches in North Carolina. Constructed from 1792 to 1795, the two-story church is built of local granite and displays segmental-arch openings. Also important among the German churches is Grace Evangelical and Reformed (Lower Stone) Church near Rockwell, which was built in 1795 and remodeled on the interior in the late nineteenth century. The monumental rough granite edifice features segmental-arch windows and a large churchyard with German-language grave stones. Both of these early buildings received towers in the twentieth century: the stone tower on Zion dates to circa 1906, while the bell tower on Grace was installed in 1901.²⁶

Four additional churches date from the 1830s to the 1850s, all of which feature an open gallery on three sides of the sanctuary. One of these, Third Creek Presbyterian Church, was built for a Scots-Irish congregation near Cleveland, dates to 1833-1835 and displays a simplicity of form and design that predates the Gothic Revival and Greek Revival movements in ecclesiastical architecture. The Flemish bond brick building displays a gable front and granite for its foundation and sills. Board-and-batten doors and blinds are original. Grave markers in the church yard date to the American Revolution.

²³ Furches.

²⁴ Christ Episcopal Church website (www.christchurchclevelendnc.org), accessed January 3, 2011.

²⁵ Davyd Foard Hood, *The Architecture of Rowan County* (Salisbury: Historic Salisbury Foundation, Inc., 2000), 83.

²⁶ Catherine W. Bishir and Michael T. Southern, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Piedmont North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 417-418; Hood, 84.

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Gothic Revival ecclesiastical architecture is well represented by several churches in the county. Except for the very early St. Luke's Episcopal Church of 1827, all of Rowan County's Gothic Revival style churches date from after 1860. Thyatira Presbyterian Church in Mill Bridge dates to the mid-nineteenth century and boasts the most elaborate brickwork in the county. This church displays corbeling on its buttressed central entrance tower and Gothic-arched door and window openings outlined with projecting drip molding. The churchyard features grave markers signed by numerous east coast stone carvers.²⁷ The 1866-69 Mount Hope United Church of Christ, in the Bostian Heights vicinity, features large Gothic-style windows in a Greek Revival temple-front form. All other Gothic Revival-style churches in Rowan County were constructed in the late 1880s and 1890s.

The building most comparable to Christ Episcopal Church in original form and finish is St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, whose congregation was formed in 1840 by a splinter group from Christ Episcopal Church. Located near Woodleaf, the simple frame building is typical of the type of worship houses built in the early and mid-nineteenth century in the western Piedmont. Unpainted weatherboard covers the rectangular building set on a dry-laid stone foundation. Inside, the double-aisle-plan church features galleries on three sides, plain benches for pews, and walls sheathed only up to the gallery. Above the gallery, the framing is exposed. A stone wall encloses the cemetery.

Although little is known about the exterior appearance of the original frame Christ Episcopal Church, evidence of its design can be seen in the building's overall dimensions, interior plan and many of the interior finishes. Also, some well-informed conclusions can be drawn about the roofline, now-gone or covered-up features, and the date of later important design features by comparing the building with other mid- and late-nineteenth-century churches in the county. Several key aspects of the original church design are intact on the interior. First, the overall dimensions of the original church – forty by sixty feet -- appear to be intact. The original interior space, structural system, and unpainted wall and floor materials are also immediately evident. The large open sanctuary space is supported by a decorative, heavy frame structural system that is original to the 1827 building. Wide, flush board walls, beaded board wainscoting, lower wood ceilings beneath the gallery, and the wood floor of the nave all create an early nineteenth century envelope inside the church.

The enclosure of the upper level of the gallery space is the most noticeable change to the interior. However, the open, airy feeling of the tall sanctuary is still intact as the open upper space is enclosed with two sloping walls that reach close to the full height of the interior. Based on the close similarity of the church building's massing with the smaller proportioned ca. 1840 St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, it is very likely that the current roof pitch matches the historic slope. It is not known if the original gallery was U-shaped, as is

²⁷ Hood, 87.

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typical of the other early to mid-nineteenth century churches in the county. There is no physical evidence of the remains of a gallery across the façade wall, and the gallery appears to have only flanked the nave.

The transformation of Christ Episcopal Church during the nineteenth century from a rather plain 1827 frame, front-gabled church to a Gothic Revival-style building, and finally to the Craftsman style is a rare combination for church building design. The Gothic Revival style in the early nineteenth-century Piedmont is based on a historical prototype and represented a connection with the medieval and ancient church. Episcopalian leaders in North Carolina in the early nineteenth century, and throughout the nineteenth century, attempted to reform their denomination in the face of a tendency toward evangelicalism on the part of mainstream Protestants by adopting the tenets of the medieval church: organ music, ritual, and the vestments associated with early Christendom. Along with the ceremonial connections to the early church, they adopted Gothic Revival-style architecture as a way to connect to high church architecture, which was most often Gothic Revival-style. At the same time, the tractarian movement, which was espoused by Bishop Ives, pushed for an adherence to medieval ritual and architecture as exemplified by the English parish church. Tractarians endorsed honest expression of materials and the use of the cross and other religious symbols, but rejected the Gothic tower and related elements. For Bishop Ives and other tractarians, architecture was meant to inspire through the arrangement of the chancel and the altar and the use of low lighting, features that would help worshipers feel the presence of God. Christ Episcopal Church, by the late nineteenth century, typifies the tractarian philosophy: it displays a simple gabled form, lacking the Gothic tower, with an interior of unpainted, hand-planed wood.²⁸

A church history records that the sacristy rooms were added and the high altar removed sometime before 1881. It is possible that the Gothic window and door openings also date to the same time period as part of a more extensive re-design of the church. The new features follow the Ecclesiological movement tenets promoted by the Episcopal Church in North Carolina beginning in the 1850s. A central entrance, a nave with a central aisle, a raised chancel and altar, and the large Gothic-arched windows lighting the nave are key elements of traditional Gothic design, according to the church tenets. Around 1900, the Rev. Bruce Owens (1871-1953) handcrafted a new altar, communion rail, pulpit, lectern, processional cross, and reredos featuring trefoil and tracery woodcarving. All of these nicely finished woodwork features are indicative of the Episcopal church's re-thinking of its liturgical needs, and look back to English church design as the source for a new American Episcopal church architecture. It is the combination of the open space, the windows lighting the space, the dark wood, and the later liturgical furniture and reredos that creates a Gothic Revival-style interior space.

²⁸ Catherine W. Bishir, *North Carolina Architecture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 234-235.

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With the construction of the Craftsman-style parish house and application of those same Craftsman elements—the knee braces, rafter tails, decorative polychromatic masonry elements—to the chapel, Christ Episcopal Church transformed into a style uncommon in ecclesiastical buildings in North Carolina: a Gothic Revival-style chapel with a Craftsman-style exterior. At first glance, these two styles seem incongruous because, unlike the Gothic Revival style, the Craftsman style was not based on a historical prototype. However, the Craftsman style adhered to the Episcopal Church's tractarian movement in its pursuit of honesty of materials. Based on the English Arts and Craftsman movement, the Craftsmen style was well-suited to Christ Episcopal Church, a building that retained its simplicity and displayed the marks of hand-craftsmanship. According to architectural historian Mark L. Brack, most Arts and Crafts artists appreciated Gothic designs of the medieval period, especially when they were executed in a vernacular fashion. According to Brack, Craftsman churches are less common outside California where the American movement began.²⁹ In North Carolina, Craftsman-style churches are rare. A church that combines the natural elements often associated with the Arts and Crafts movement while also exhibiting the elements of High Church Episcopalianism is All Saints Episcopal Church in Linville, Avery County. Built in 1913 following the design of architect Henry Bacon, the rustic-style church follows the same aesthetic philosophy apparent at Christ Episcopal Church where workmanship and simplicity combine with formal ecclesiastic components.³⁰

The 1926 Christ Episcopal Church parish house was built to complement the form of the chapel. Its front-gable, north-south orientation matches the original building, but by being set back it defers to the more holy edifice. The parish house displays Craftsman-style elements, most notable in the knee braces, carved purlins, and rafter tails that grace the main roof and portico roof. The stocky brick posts on capped piers and capped kneewalls of the portico, as well as the soldier-course bordered flush panels on the façade with contrasting corner blocks, are also a common Craftsman-style element. These same features were applied to the chapel after it was brick veneered upon completion of the parish house. Throughout North Carolina these types of Craftsman-style elements appeared on mostly dwellings, but also institutional buildings. The style reflected the need for simplicity and practicality in an ever-industrializing society. The Craftsman style spread quickly in the early decades of the twentieth century thanks to magazines and pattern books of the period. The construction of a modern parish house built in a widely popular style likely led to the congregation's desire for an updated and matching modern church.

China Grove Methodist Episcopal Church South, in China Grove, Rowan County, has an architectural evolution similar to that of Christ Episcopal Church. Built in 1900 as a simple frame structure, it has Gothic-arched windows that are likely original. It too was altered in 1926, to its current brick-veneered

²⁹ Mark L. Brack, "Redefining Religious Architecture: Two Craftsman Churches in California," www.sacredplaces.org. Accessed May 4, 2011.

³⁰ Bishir, 382-383.

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Craftsman-style appearance, with knee brackets, exposed rafter ends, and an enclosed projecting gabled entry bay. The original church building is now connected to a large 1950 two-story brick educational wing to the rear and northwest of the church, and stands to the southeast of a brick sanctuary built in 1967.

Christ Church is the oldest building dedicated to the Episcopal denomination in Rowan County. The church has housed an active congregation for 185 years and as such, has evolved physically over that time. The church epitomizes the simplified vernacular Gothic Revival style with Craftsman-style influences resulting from a 1926 redesign. Much remains of the original nineteenth-century interior and the changes likely made during a late nineteenth-century refitting to a Gothic Revival-style space, including the addition of the sacristies and the rearrangement of the main entry. The altar and reredos added in 1900 serve to reinforce the Gothic Revival-style character of the interior.

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UTM References (continued)

5: 17 530180 3954320

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property contains the 10.09-acre parcel historically associated with the Christ Episcopal Church and is identified as parcel number 272001.

Boundary Justification

The boundary for Christ Episcopal Church and its support structures and sites is the 10.09 acres historically associated with the church. The original five-and-one-quarter acre tract was deeded to the church in 1821. Frank Thompson deeded the final four-and-three-quarter parcel in 1946. This latter tract contains the entrance road and its allée of deodar cedar trees planted at that time.